



# *Waterbury Public Schools*

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February 18, 2011

To whom it may concern:

The Waterbury School District, like other large Connecticut urban school districts, struggles with high truancy and dropout rates among its largely poor, minority students. The District has worked very hard to reduce truancy and despite intensive efforts to educate parents on the importance of school attendance through letters, phone calls and home visits, students continue to be truant. In 2006, representatives from our schools, our community and the City worked together to find ways to improve student attendance, reduce truancy and increase student performance and graduation rates. Judge Brunnock, a member of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Truancy Prevention and the Judge for the Waterbury Children's Probate Court, suggested Truancy Clinic, a program existing in Rhode Island.

In collaboration with Judge Thomas Brunnock, I helped to establish a Waterbury Truancy Clinic in two of our elementary schools. The non-punitive program seeks to target and correct truancy problems early by involving the student and the student's family. Students with high numbers of absences in those schools are referred to Judge Brunnock's clinic. Their families overwhelmingly agree to participate in the voluntary program which seeks to find the reason for student's truancy and to correct it.

This unique and effective partnership between Judge Brunnock of the Children's Probate Court and the Waterbury school district is proven to be successful in improving student attendance in our schools. Our data shows that attendance markedly improved for the students involved in Truancy Clinic. As a result, the program is expanded into two more elementary schools for a total of four in Waterbury.

Children who attend school more do better academically, graduate more often and have more success in higher education and employment. Children who drop out of school are more likely to be unemployed, incarcerated or on welfare. Waterbury families and children and the State of Connecticut would greatly benefit from an expansion of the Truancy Clinic into all twenty (20) of our elementary schools and all three (3) of our middle schools. The Waterbury Truancy Clinic is a proven, effective program which significantly reduces truancy and I hope that funding can be found to expand it.

Sincerely,

Anne Marie Cullinan